



The athletic fields of Spec Pond lie under historic farmland that was so vital to Wilbraham farmers. (Charles F. Bennett photo)

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space for outdoor fun and a swimming area.

The goal was to get the proposal on the town meeting warrant and take the pond and adjacent former farmland by eminent domain or purchase it outright.

In Ethel’s story, she alludes to a local historian’s tales that arose in the debate to have the town acquire the pond. Spec Pond was one half of a matching set of glasses (spectacles). It is an ancient kettle pond formed by the retreating glacier that used to cover part of Wilbraham, all the way to the base of Wilbraham Mountain, which was once a glacial lake with its sandy shore running along what would eventually be called Main Street. All that farmland around the pond had a nickname called “The Plains.”

Farmhands

The Spec Pond end of Boston Road ran east and west next to the railroad tracks built there in the 1840s. It was fertile farmland and comprised the area where the cement terminal, Construction Service Co., is now located at 2420 Boston Road. The land that is now on the busy artery up to where Post Office Park is now, was well-sought-after farmland and not far from the drainage basin of the Chicopee River.

My mom wrote, “In 1852 and 1855 the records show that Cyrus Edson purchased from Harriet Bliss about 56 acres west and south of William Tupper’s land for \$600. The land ran along the Spec Pond to Boston Road for 107 rods (an early-American measurement of land).”

The access road was built on land believed to be bordered by Tupper and Edson’s parcels.

Some time around 1855 Edson farmed a large field of buckwheat on his land and hired a gang of men to harvest the buckwheat. The job had to be done right away because a killing frost was imminent. The crop would be ruined if they didn’t get to work right away.

It was said that Cyrus Edson was a hard drinker in his early days. But, he had “gone straight” at a revival in one of the red schoolhouses in the Glendale section of the Mountain and never touched liquor again. And, also wouldn’t let his hired hands drink it either.

So, the gang of hands who were employed to gather the buckwheat told Edson that if he didn’t go across Boston Road and buy some

rum for them from the Blisses, they would not swing a scythe for him and go “on strike”. It was quite a test for Edson, who could expect quite a loss if the buckwheat wasn’t brought in ahead of the weather.

Cyrus was true to his word and refused to buy the booze. And, he started the back-breaking work of cutting the wheat all by himself without the help of his stubborn helpers.

Well, the records show that the hired hands, out of admiration for the principles exhibited by Edson, became ashamed, went back to work and saved the crop.

Railroad Tracks

Before Edson had purchased the land it was long owned by Abel Bliss Jr. Bliss’s heirs sold various parcels to farmers from eastern Wilbraham whose farmland was not as productive as the acreage around Spec Pond.

The soil was said to be “light” and excellent for rye and buckwheat. It was good for cultivation, had few weeds and made the growing of corn profitable. Some farmers leased land on both sides of the railroad tracks that run along that property.

(Today you can still see freight trains and Amtrak passenger coaches traveling by the baseball fields at Spec Pond blowing their whistles. When we lived on Federal Lane, near Minnechaug, you still hear the trains miles away in North Wilbraham blowing their whistles on their way to Boston or the Berkshires.)

The farmer, William Tupper, bought a 24-rod wide strip south of the railroad tracks of the Boston & Albany Railroad along the western border of the pond for 60 to 70 rods from the Blisses. He would let the land lie fallow one year and then planted it the next year.

Corn

According to my mother’s reporting, when corn was grown near the pond it had its own way of bringing a certain farming culture to our town’s hard-working early residents. After the land was plowed, smoothed and harrowed, the farmer would prepare a tub of early Canada seed corn. The farmhands would each have a hoe and a “planting bag” tied around his waist in preparation. It was made from the upper six inches of an old cowhide boot tacked to a wooden base. Then the seeds were sown into the earth.

When the planting bag needed refilling it provided a

break for the workers to refresh themselves with fresh cider. (She didn’t say if it was hard cider or the kind you get a Rice’s these days.) Anyhow, the entire farm activity, in the shadow of Spec Pond was called “Planting Day on the Plains”.

Nevertheless, the 1961 Lions Club, in their fervor to sponsor Spec Pond for the town, were proud saying the farmers from 100 years earlier would also have been proud how the Spec Pond Recreation Area would turn out. And, they would be even prouder if they knew what it does for our town in 2026 as the country celebrates its 250th birthday

Revolutionary Moment

We continue to honor our country’s birthday, 250 years of freedom, each month. Since this month is the 250th anniversary of Col. Henry Knox’s Train of Artillery that traveled through Wilbraham in January 15 and 16, 1776, we are listing his route according to “The Military Rolls of the Outward Commons” by Bruce Tingle.

Knox hauled captured British cannons from Ft. Ticonderoga at Crown Point, N. Y. and traveled through Wilbraham to Boston in 1775-76 at the start of the Revolutionary War.

“The procession went up Maple Street and Mountain Road and then downhill, over a stone bridge and spanning Spear Brook and then onto Boston Road near the foot of Butler Hill. The only section of the bridge still visible is a small section over which the driveway to Co-Ed Billiards travels.”

Col. Knox reported to Gen. Washington in Boston on January 24, 1776. The cannons were positioned in March and the British evacuated the town. Knox went on to become a major general and the first Secretary of War.

Sources: “History of Wilbraham Bicentennial Edition 1763-1963” edited by Charles Merrick; “The History of Wilbraham, 1731, 1763-1913 by Chauncey E. Peck; “Military Rolls of Outward Commons” by J. Bruce Tingle. The Springfield Morning Union.

Editor Emeritus Charlie Bennett is a member of the Historic Commission and a trustee of the Wilbraham Atheneum Society. Readers can contact him with comments or ideas for the column at cbennett4765@charter.net.

Hampden Parks and Recreation announces programming

HAMPDEN — Hampden Parks & Recreation is excited to announce a variety of new and returning programs for youth and adults this winter and spring. Thanks to the recent move into a new facility with expanded classroom and recreation space, Parks & Recreation can offer more diverse programs, increased capacity, and new opportunities for the community to connect, learn, and stay active.

February Vacation Youth Programs

Mad Science Secret Agent Lab (Grades 1–6) A hands-on science and forensics program where young detectives explore fingerprinting, evidence collection, and investigative science.

Feb. 16 to 20 9 a.m. to Noon

Hampden Town Hall, Classroom E2 Cost: \$180 | Register: Dec. 30 to Feb. 10 Youth February Vacation Futsal Clinic An energetic, skill-building soccer clinic led by FSS (Futsal and Street Soccer)

coaches. Open to all experience levels.

Feb. 16 to 20 9 a.m. to Noon Hampden Parks & Recreation Gym

Cost: \$150 | Register: Dec. 30 to Feb. 11

Youth & Adult Art Programs

Multicultural Art Adventures (Grades 1–6) A 6-week hands-on art program exploring global art traditions. Students create five finished artworks and participate in a student-curated gallery.

Wednesdays, Feb. 25 to Apr. 1

Cost: \$135 | Register: Jan. 7 to Feb. 23

Calming the Chaos: Studio Sessions (Ages 18+) A relaxing art and mindfulness series focused on stress relief, creativity, and connection. No experience required.

Thursdays, Feb. 26 to Apr. 2

Cost: \$135 | Register: Jan. 7 to Feb. 23

Both programs are taught by Hampden resident Erin Leigh Boughamer, Professional Artist and MA Licensed Art Educator.

Ongoing Recreation Opportunities

Golf Simulator: Year-round play and practice; reservations begin January 19, 2026

Pickleball: Level-based weekday play at Thornton Burgess Gymnasium; \$3 per session

The expanded space at the new Parks & Recreation facility allows for increased programming, improved scheduling flexibility, and new offerings for residents of all ages. Hampden Parks & Recreation looks forward to continuing to grow and serve the community.

For more information and registration details contact Hampden Parks and Recreation at parks@hampdenma.gov or (413) 566-2151 Ext 108.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD26P0048EA Estate of: Tyrone Jaymes Osoimalo Date of Death: 11/21/2025 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION To all interested persons: A Petition for Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Amanda Walker of Wilbraham, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that Amanda Walker of Wilbraham, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration. IMPORTANT NOTICE You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a writ-

ten appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/09/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you. UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administra-

tion is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration. WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court. Date: January 12, 2026 Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate 01/22/2026

PUBLIC NOTICES ARE NOW ONLINE

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- Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts’ public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

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visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

ADVERTISING SALES

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Turley Publications, a locally owned family business, offers a competitive commission structure, 401k, and health plan.

Send resume & cover letter to:

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Wilbraham-Hampden Times

OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries. One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place. The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice (with a word limit of up to 500 words) and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

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